

## 10,27,22 The Deceptive Influence of False Teachers (Part 3)

I'm going to begin by giving you an overview of God's plan for the ages, the timeline of human history, and then bring all of this into some implications for our generation.

First, just a quick definition of a term from the scriptures that I'll be using. The word is "glory". Throughout the Old and New Testaments, glory primarily refers to the times in which the invisible God made Himself visible so we could see something of the wonder of Who He is.

Here are some examples – first the Old Testament, then the New Testament;

(2 Chron. 5:13-14) "The trumpeters and singers joined together to praise and thank the LORD with one voice. They lifted up their voices, accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and musical instruments, in praise to the LORD: 'For He is good; His loving devotion endures forever.' And the temple, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand there to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God."

(John 1:1, 1: 14 & 14:9) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. . . He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

Now, let's bring the two Testaments together and see the progression of God revealing Himself to us;

(Heb. 1: 1-3) "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us in His Son . . . who (is) the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person."

Prior to the coming of Christ, God's self-revelation was varied and partial, but all that God is, is seen in His Son.

Ok, so that's what "glory" means – whether in part, as in the Old Testament, or in fullness as in the New Testament, glory is the invisible God making Himself visible.

I'm going to read something from a book Larry Jones recommended I read called, "Representation of the Invisible God" and then make some comments that will tie into where we're going with this;

“This, then, is a thought which has come out from eternity, God purposing to be represented in His universe, to have representation in man, and that eternal thought lies behind literally everything that exists. It is before creation, before the fall, and therefore before redemption. It is the pure thought of God unclouded by sin and sin's consequences. It stands back there as governing all the thought of God projected into the future. It is as though God decided He would have a representation of Himself, the invisible God, in visible form, in the form of man, and that He would be seen, be known, be understood; and, more than that, He would constitute upon a living relationship that which would represent Him not merely officially but in nature, after His own heart. By that means He would make Himself known, would give Himself, and would bring the creation into something more than mechanical obedience and response to His sovereign will; He would bring us into agreeable, desired, loving fellowship with Himself, with His own heart, along the line of consent, and not of compulsion. That is what representation means in brief. It is exactly what it means in the case of the Lord Jesus being the image of the invisible God, and exactly what it means that the Church is conformed to the image of His Son. This thought lies behind everything, goes before creation, and then governs creation.”

So, now we can look at the history of humanity as the history of God's laboring to bring into existence this eternal, divine thought of organic representation.

Most scholars believe that there are seven distinct dispensations; we could call them Ages or divisions in history, each one marks a unique way in which God deals with those living in each dispensation as He moves forward in His plan.

Also, each dispensation is an advance on the previous dispensation in terms of God's self-revelation. God had determined that our knowledge of Him over the 7000 years of human history would be progressive.

I'm not going to take the time to list the dispensations and the unique characteristics of each, but if that's a study you'd like to pursue, let me know; there are books I can recommend.

90% of the Bible is dealing with the dispensation of Israel and the dispensation of the Church, and that's where we will spend our time tonight.

Israel's dispensation runs from Moses to the end of the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ on earth. Abraham lived during the Age of the patriarchs and is the father

of faith to people of Israel, but technically, the Age of Israel began with the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai.

Based on what we know of the timeline of Israel, one might wonder where the Church fits into this, since we are in a dispensation that began 2000 years ago and ends at the rapture, which happens *prior* to the reign of Israel's Messiah in His millennial kingdom.

We know from Romans 11 that following the crucifixion of Christ, the dispensation of Israel was put on hold – so far, for 2000 years.

(Rom. 11:1, 25-28) “Has God cast away His people (Israel)? . . . Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (to the Church). And (then) all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

“The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”

(At the present time) concerning the gospel, they are enemies . . . , but concerning the election (in God's eternal plan) they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.”

Once the Church is completed and raptured, God will turn His attention back to Israel and He will purify them through the Tribulation and restore them at the end of that period, and establish them as the head of all nations in the reign of their Messiah.

The Church Age is like a parenthesis in time; Israel is God's focus before and after the dispensation of the Church, but not during this temporary parenthetical setting aside of Israel because of their national rejection of Christ.

But the Church is *much more* than a parenthesis in the history of Israel. The distinctions between the Church and Israel are substantial, and it's the failure of the Church to recognize what those distinctions are that has caused an immense amount of confusion and interpretative distortion in understanding the scriptures.

Here's how Sparks words it;

“It is of greatest importance to recognize the difference between the Church and Israel. Both worship the One and only true God but the Church has a heavenly calling, while Israel has an earthly calling. The two must not be confused. Christianity does not come out of Judaism as some think.

Christianity is a new thing, entirely distinct from Judaism. The Church is a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Every member of the Church is born of God (Jn. 1:13), is born of the Spirit (Jn. 3:5), and of incorruptible seed by the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). Every member has been identified with Christ in death (Rom. 6:4) and in resurrection (Col. 3:1), and is seated in Him in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6). The promised blessings for the Church are spiritual and heavenly (Eph. 1:3). All blessings promised Israel are earthly, are centered in Palestine, and are conditioned upon obedience to God (Debt. 28:1-14). Israel and the Church are two separate and distinct programs. The program for Israel was interrupted at the close of the 69<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel's prophecy because Israel rejected and crucified her Messiah through whom that program should have been fulfilled."

Strombeck adds this;

"Following the temporary setting aside of Israel, God immediately began His program for the Church. He will carry it to completion in the rapture. When that has been accomplished, He will return to purify and prepare Israel to accept their Messiah by whom God's program for them shall be carried out."

And finally, from Chafer;

"The entire Old Testament expectation is involved with its earthly kingdom, the glory of Israel, and the promised Messiah seated on David's throne in Jerusalem. When these are applied to the Church, as they too often are, there is nothing on which to base that application. Such incongruity in doctrine as is developed by confusing Judaism with Christianity can exist only because of the failure to consider the issues involved. The kingdom promised to Israel was rejected and postponed until the mystery of the Church could be completed.

We must recognize the foundational truth that Christ has died, is risen, is ascended, and that the Spirit is now resident in the hearts of all who believe. These age-transforming events with all they engender at once create an entirely new relationship between God and man and especially between God and those who are saved. The distinctions between the age of Israel and the age of the church are independent and are uncomplicated as long as they are understood to represent two separate rules of life related to two distinct ages or dispensations in God's dealing with man."

All of the Old Testament prophecies given to Israel will be fulfilled in the coming kingdom of their Messiah. And as Sparks said, Israel's calling was earthly – to be a nation among nations for 1000 years with their King reigning from the throne of His father David in Jerusalem.

The calling of the Church is not earthly, but heavenly or we could say, “spiritual” rather than “material”.

And when you lay the destiny of Israel as head of the nations on earth during the Millennium beside the destiny of the Church, you will be able to see the immense difference in these two dispensations and callings. This is Bilheimer's description of our future and then I'll follow up with another quote from Strombeck;

“Literally everything Christ is doing in our lives is designed to qualify His Eternal Companion for entering into full partnership with her Lord in the governance of the universe (*Israel is to govern the earth, the Church is to govern all creation*) . . . As the bride of the Eternal Son, she is to share with Him *universal* sovereignty. . . Here is a completely new, unique, and exclusive order of beings which may be called a new species. There is nothing like it in all the kingdoms of infinity. This is the order of beings which God envisioned when He spoke the worlds into being. This is the order of beings which Paul called, ‘the New Man’ (Eph 2:15) destined through the new birth (partaking of the divine nature) to be the aristocracy of the universe. . . we are to be princes of the heavenly realm. . . Christ will administrate and govern His eternal kingdom through His body, the Church. Satan will be displaced by the bride of the Son of God.”

Now, from Strombeck;

“God's purpose then in the lives of His children while here on earth is to create, develop, strengthen, and refine that complete dependence on Him which must be found in those who, throughout all eternity, are to be the very closest to Him and share His glory . . . That is why God places so great an emphasis upon the trial of faith. He is preparing for Himself, within a new creation in Christ Jesus, those who will be in complete voluntary dependence upon Him and in living subjection to Him . . . This is the consummation of grace. All who in this age of grace (the dispensation of the Church) believe on the Son shall be one in the Father and in the Son as they Two are one in Each Other. The Son has given them the glory which was given Him by the Father. They shall be with Him where He is. And they shall

be loved by the same love wherewith the Father loved the Son before the foundation of the world. . . Many who call themselves Christians say they are not concerned about the future state. What they are interested in is the present. But the Bible teaches that it is the future state that is of *greatest* importance. While there are glories of salvation to be enjoyed by the believer now, while in the present body there is still the presence of sin, poverty, sickness, death and sorrow which will never be gotten away from during the present life. In fact, and this is of utmost importance, the earthly existence of the saved is but a brief period of preparation for an eternal calling. Few there seem to be who realize the glories that await those who are saved and how exalted a position is to be held by them throughout an unending eternity. Finite mind cannot grasp the fullness of all this, but the Bible reveals enough to show that it shall be the greatest thing that has ever come to any of God's creatures."

We've seen in other studies that the position of the Church Age believer is not only higher than those who make up the nation of Israel, but also higher than all angels, principalities and powers.

The angels are in perfect harmony with God, but they are a different class of beings. Perfect harmony is different than perfect unity. Christians are brought into the unity that now exists between the Father and the Son.

We will never be deity, but of all God's creation, we are to be closest to Him in unity and glory. As Paul puts it, we are "members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church (Eph. 5:30-32).

The Church exists for only one purpose – to be the living representation and expression of Christ in this world. The Church is simply to be Christ expressed.

The Church is not here to imitate the morality or religious disciplines we see in the denominations; she is not here to spread the Christian religion; she is not here to show people what the religious ideals of Christian tradition look like.

She is here only to be the means by which Christ can express Himself visibly. So, when Jesus said, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father", the complement to that would be that we could say, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Son". In Heb. 10:5 Jesus explains why He came;

“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You (Father) did not desire, but *a body* You have prepared for Me.’”

Sacrifice and offering are representative of the outward religion of Judaism in the Age of Israel. But a body in which the Father could give expression to Himself through the Son lays the spiritual foundation of the Age of the Church.

The relationship that Jesus had with His Father is to be the relationship we are to have with Christ. That’s what *a body* is for – to give outward expression to the invisible thoughts of the mind, and we are the spiritual *body* of Christ.

When the Church becomes an organization seeking to do great things for God based on the blueprint of the Bible, it ceases to be what it is meant to be.

And through Satan’s emissaries, the false teachers, this is the single greatest deception to penetrate the minds of Christians over the last 2000 years. Christ in personal expression; the life of Jesus being manifest through our moral bodies, has been replaced by the Christian religion. This has been Satan’s ace trump in the spiritual conflict.

I don’t understand how believers can see clearly what is written about our true calling and mission here as those who are pilgrims and strangers in a world that hated Christ and would hate His true followers, and then turn around in the next breath and call for us to rise up and join the fight of political activism to save our country and restore our rights and once again gain the world’s respect and admiration.

Remember the last line of Bilheimer’s quote?

“Christ will administrate and govern His eternal kingdom through His body, the Church. Satan will be displaced by the bride of the Son of God.”

The only thing that political activist pastors want to displace is Biden. Listen to this quote by John Blanchard;

“The church was arguably at its strongest and purest state when surrounded by a pagan Roman society over which it had hardly any cultural influence, let alone cultural dominance. And yet today, the big concern of Christians is that ‘culture’ doesn’t take their Christian values seriously anymore, insisting that the church would be better off if it had more say in the governance of nations. We have everything backwards. Our concern should be the purity within the church, not its relevance to the culture outside of it. A church that

feels empowered by validation from the world is yoked with the world, since it is ultimately the world's approval that empowers it. A church that's empowered by worldly validation is spiritually dead, no matter how zealous it might be in its moral crusade."

I said all this for the simple reason that since, according to our Lord in Matt. 24:4 and similar passages in the epistles, deception is our number one battle at the end of the Church Age, we need to see how subtle and powerful that deception can be.

Because of the relentless pressure of the enemy trying to destroy the spiritual life of the Church, every generation is meant to be involved in exposing, warning, and resisting the works of darkness;

(Eph. 5:11) "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them."

I want to touch on something else related to *our* generation, and to do this, I'm going to begin with a familiar passage in 1 Chron. 12:32);

"Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."

This passage is normally used by prophecy teachers to show the importance of "understanding the times". And, obviously that's important – there are several passages, especially in the gospels and the epistles commanding us to know the time we are living in.

So, we need to step back and view the 2000-year sweep of this age and the large number of generations that represents.

For example, Acts 13:36 shows the relationship David had with God and it also shows David's unique understanding of what God's will for him was in "his own generation".

(Acts 13:36) "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers . . ."

The principle that Luke is bringing out in Acts 13 is true in literally every generation of the Church Age. Those in tune with the Lord are aware of both the general will of God for *all* generations, as well as the unique features of God's movements in their *own* generation.



We're living in the generation that will see the return of Christ, how could we not be making a big deal about that? Should John the Baptist have been rebuked and told to calm down about the Lord's first coming? Pastors are minimizing both the dangers of this time and, for the most part, they are also minimizing the incredible reality of the Lord's soon return.

Here's what Sparks pointed out about this;

"I venture to suggest to you, that perhaps the most important thing just now, is for the people of God to know the nature of the time in which they live, so far as *God* is concerned. There are tremendous amounts of confusion, and complications are immense and far-reaching just now in Christianity. Many, many people don't know where they are; what is right, and what is not right; what is the truth, and what is not the truth. And, I repeat, the important thing, the *supremely* important thing, is to understand the times in order to know what the Church ought to do *now*; what *Christians* ought to do *now*, because of the peculiar and particular nature of what *God* is doing *now*. I think you will agree with me that this is very vital."

This is what the pulpits of the world should be giving to their congregations – pastors should be just as on fire about warning against deception and making sure their people are fully awake to our time in history as the pastors in Europe were in Luther's generation about God's move in recovering the truth of justification by faith.

Pastors who aren't doing this may be teaching a multitude of other things on Sunday mornings, some of which might be absolutely solid doctrinally – but God is doing something unique and those with ears to hear what the Spirit is saying *now*, will be teaching in obedience to Him.

I'm going to give an illustration for this – the tale of two shepherds (I'm using "shepherds" because it emphasizes the dual responsibilities of feeding and protecting).

James is pastor of a church on the East Coast. His teaching is faithful, consistent and accurate doctrinally. He has also done an excellent job in communicating the principles of the daily Christian walk. He has also mentioned that the signs we see around us likely indicate the soon return of the Lord.

Philip is pastor of a church on the West Coast. His teaching is also faithful and sound. And he also does a great job in prepping his people to walk according to the principles given in the scriptures.

But that's where the similarities end.

James thinks it's *possible* that we are close to the Lord's return, but he's not sure and doesn't want to be classified as an end-time fanatic, so his focus is on teaching all of the Bible verse-by-verse, year by year.

Philip has "ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches" *now*. So, like the sons of Issachar, Philip knows *exactly* what the church is supposed to do. And making sure his teaching is balanced and unoffensive is not his goal – he's following the Holy Spirit's leading wherever that takes him.

He knows that at this time in history, the Spirit's leading is to warn his people of the dangers related to the level of deception that this generation faces, and to thoroughly instruct them concerning the nearness of the return of their Lord.

Because of what the Lord has shown him, he has become extremely *unbalanced* in the opinion of general Christianity, but his people are awake, alert and equipped to successfully face the dangers of their generation. Philip has fed them and he has protected them. They are able to discern the deception around them and they have lifted up their eyes because they *know* their redemption draws near. This world has nothing in them.

At the first coming of Christ, God revealed to Simeon, Anna and John the Baptist that His coming was near. God told Simeon he wouldn't die before he held the newborn son of God in his hands, Anna was also shown Who this Child was, and praised God in the temple, and for John, it was his entire life. These three were representative of the remnant in Israel that saw the signs of the messiah's coming, believed those signs, and acted accordingly.

The same is meant to be true for the second coming. God has presented the signs, he has worked inwardly in the spirits of those whose ears are open to him, and a remnant of the global church is involved in serving the church in ways that are similar to the ministry of John the Baptist. John's call to the nation of Israel to wake up and recognize their Messiah is identical to the end time remnant's call to the church to wake up and recognize the nearness of the rapture.

And during the Tribulation we know there are two witnesses who are to prepare Israel for the coming of their Messiah. This is nearly identical to John the Baptist's ministry of preparing the nation for the coming of the Lord.

Like the Phillip in our illustration, John was unbalanced – his teaching had an *extreme* emphasis on the coming of Israel's Messiah.

The second coming of Christ brings heaven to earth – transforms earth into an Edenic paradise – *banishes* Satan and all his forces – and fulfills every promise in the Bible of the manifest kingdom of God's Son.

His second coming changes literally everything. All that has happened throughout human history has been a prelude and preparation for the coming kingdom of God's Son.

And now we are on the precipice of that event.

In spite of that, we are told by millions of pastors that we shouldn't focus on that; we can mention it or teach it doctrinally, but to *emphasize* it is to be lopsided and fanatic. We can't be *sure* we're that close, no one knows the day or the hour, and there's always been deception in the world, so get a grip and keep a balanced perspective.

Can you imagine if the pastors of today lived during the ministry of John the Baptist? They would have accused him of overemphasizing the coming of Christ. They may have tolerated him, but they would have continued to deliver messages on the Sabbath that focused on the general principles of how the people of God should live morally, have their devotions, learn how to have good marriages, etc. all the kinds of topics that are happening on Sunday mornings around our nation.

Does anyone really think that that is what the message of the two witnesses is going to be, or that it was what John the Baptist *should* have been doing? Should pastors in our generation who want to prepare the Bride for the rapture and warn the Church of the dangers in our time be ignored or rebuked for doing so?

Don't you think it's more likely that the pastors who *aren't* preparing, warning and teaching the full implications of the soon return of the Lord are the pastors who are out of sync with what the Lord desires for His people? *Those* are the pastors who have absolutely no understanding of where we are in history and are deaf to hearing what the Spirit is saying to the Church *now*.

The Lord has always had principles and even books in the Bible that He wanted emphasized in each generation to align with what He was seeking to *accomplish* in that generation.

That's why I threw in Luther as an illustration. God was emphasizing two things in Luther's generation – the recovery of justification by faith and the book of Romans. These truths had been veiled, but now God wanted them brought to light and He chose Luther to initiate that recovery movement.

The same thing happened in the early 1900's through John Nelson Darby. The true nature of the church as the body of Christ and the prophetic scriptures had both been either ignored or hidden in past generations. The Holy Spirit brought them back to the forefront through Darby.

And, again, that's why I mentioned the sons of Issachar in 1 Chron. By God's grace, based on the understanding He gave them of the time they were living in, they knew exactly "*what Israel should do*".

If a pastor, or *any* Christian, doesn't know the time they're living in, they obviously have no clue "*what the Church should do*".

Listen to how this author addresses that;

"Where is the voice of authority today? Where are those who are really speaking with authority? We are languishing terribly in every part of life for the voice of authority. The Church is languishing for want of a voice of spiritual authority, for lack of that prophetic note – 'Thus saith the Lord!' The world is languishing for lack of authority, and that authority is with those who have seen, who have ears to hear. And may it not be that that was the thing about the Lord Jesus that carried such weight, for 'He spoke as One having authority, and not as the Scribes' (Matt. 7:29). The Scribes were the authorities. If anybody wanted an interpretation of the law, they went to the Scribes. If they wanted to know what the authoritative position was, they went to the Scribes. But Jesus spoke as One having authority, and *not* as the Scribes. Wherein lay that authority? Just that in all things He could say, 'I know! It is not what I have read, what I have been told, or what I have studied that is with power, but it's that I know! I have seen!'"

There are two primary implications or results of pastors *not* moving with the Spirit in relation to God's work at an end time;

- 1) The people of God experience decreased protection against deception, which the Lord said in Matt. 24 was the predominant characteristic globally in this final generation. In Acts 20:29-31 Luke wrote about Paul's final words to the elders in Ephesus;

"I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."

Paul warned the Ephesian leaders "night and day with tears"; and the deception Paul warned about was nowhere *near* that which the scriptures tell us will blanket this world in *our* generation. But today, 'night and day with tears' is out, and warnings like this are rarely even mentioned, let alone emphasized.

- 2) When people are unable to focus on that which God wants them focused on, church activities *increase* – programs and projects take precedence over the development of the spiritual life. The training needed to hear what the Spirit is saying, and the training needed to have our spiritual senses exercised unto spiritual discernment is set aside in favor of the busyness of the church machine. When the church is uncertain what to do, it's gets busy.

God is patient and His priorities are all that should matter to us. Humans are not patient, so the whole 'Martha vs. Mary' syndrome kicks in. In other words, 'Christianity' has taken the stage, and growing in the knowledge of Christ is put on the back burner.

What God is doing *now* is separating those involved in generic "Christianity" from those who are becoming part of the final corporate expression of Christ.

The second group will be able to identify the first – the first, however, have no idea what the difference even is.

And that, in my understanding, is the essence of the end-time deception that the apostles saw and warned us of in their prophetic writings.

The Church is meant to have hope and confidence about God's *directive* will for them in their generation – not just general knowledge of what all believers have always needed to know.

How can we be excited and expectant, if we are uncertain, maybe even doubtful?

Even if we take ourselves out of the picture by not being occupied with “what’s in it for us”? and instead, ask ourselves, “what’s in this for our Lord”? an awareness of our time in history brings a closeness to Christ in empathy with the purpose of His sufferings.

(Isa. 55:11) “He shall see [the fruit] of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

(Heb. 12:2) “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

I used to think the “joy set before Him” was us. I’m sure that’s part of it, but it’s also a very me-centered and narrow focus. What Christ was able to look forward to because of His sacrifice was, for lack of a better word, ‘everything’.

A redeemed humanity; an eternal companion; a corporate spiritual body through which He could manifest His glory; but *also*, a new creation, a new heavens and new earth, the banishment of all evil and pain and suffering.

And God has filled our generation with an abundance of signs showing those willing to see, that we are a moment’s away from Christ receiving all He has suffered for; and of us being pulled out of this world to rejoice with Him in His victory.

But let’s not get carried away, right? We can touch on this from time to time, if it happens to come up. We don’t want to become so heavenly minded that we’re no earthly good.

What *really* matters are our potlucks and projects and knowing we have a pastor who makes us feel comfortable on Sunday morning – not because he’s flooding our souls with eternal truth, but because he’s great at giving illustrations and making applications showing us how we can wake up Monday morning with a plan.

I honestly don’t know anything more I can say to try to show the incredible contrast between where Christ desires to take His people as this age wraps up and where Christianity wants to take us.

But I can say with absolute certainty that if I'm right in what I've taught (and that's *your* decision) we are facing extreme danger from an enemy who doesn't want us to know or believe *any* of this. And he will continue to send compromising pastors our way to pull us away from heaven and encourage us to seek those things (Christian or otherwise) which are on earth instead; in spite of Paul's warning in Col. 3:1-2;

“Since you have been raised with Christ, strive for the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, *not* on earthly things . . .”

If the pastor of the church you attend is not placing a massive emphasis from the pulpit on convincing and instructing his congregation and preparing them for the coming of the Lord and spending an equally massive amount of time explaining, detailing, and warning (with tears) the deceptions in the world and in contemporary Christianity, then that pastor is absolutely clueless on knowing what he should be doing.

And no matter what he's doing instead, and how impressive it might be to everyone around him, his ears are closed to what the Spirit is saying to the churches; and very soon he will have to give an account of *all* this when he stands face to face with his Lord.

If you believe the Lord wants you in your church, then as He leads in the relationships you have there, you will have to do for those you love what your pastor is unwilling to do.

God is not going to change His plan and purpose for His people to accommodate the Laodicean character of 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians who, with itching ears, gather to themselves pastors who will tell them what they *want* to hear instead of what they *need* to hear.

The only thing that can set us free to live the life we've been given in Christ is the truth, and that truth has to come to us under the governance and definition of God's Spirit, not based on a five-year sermon plan designed by a professional hireling.

Because of where we are in the history of the Church, there is more at stake now than ever, the battle is more intense, and the deception is more powerful. Our survival will depend on studying with a depth and determination that allows us to show ourselves approved to God.